

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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LADY LOVELACE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "JUDITH WYNNE," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XXI.

PHIL, however, when he heard of the projected ball, was far more inclined to hasten his journey than to retard it.

"Where was the use," he growled to himself, "of going out of his way to hunt for disagreeables when he had only to sit still and think for five minutes and up they came, like mushrooms after rain? Why should he take the trouble to go all the way down to Stanham to this wretched ball, unless he had the privilege of saying beforehand to Edie, with a fine air of command, 'Edie, I intend to have at least every other valse with you,' or, 'Edie, I object to that inane-looking individual you've just been dancing with, and I shall feel greatly obliged if you will snub him next time he comes up to speak to you.'"

It must be confessed that Phil Wickham, just then, was not in his usually serene frame of mind. He was—for him, that is—oddly irritable at times; was conscious—a new experience for him—that he had nerves; resented the consciousness, tried to laugh it off; tried to convince himself that he was developing imaginative powers of a high order; failed in both attempts; was forced to confess that, after all, it was his suspended engagement that was pressing upon him and worrying him, now on this side, now on that; said to himself he would be heartily glad of a good toss on the Atlantic, a spin through the States, and that, meantime, having nothing better to do, he would throw himself, heart and soul, into Miss Lucy Selwyn's affairs, which, just then, were presenting a series of complications.

In the short, murky November days that

were setting in, Phil might very often have been seen making his way to Grafton Street, and, it must be admitted, he never failed to receive the warmest of welcomes at Miss Selwyn's hands.

How Lucy came to be located there is easily explained.

Ellinor Yorke, true to her promise to Phil, on the day after her interview with him, called upon Miss Selwyn in her dreary boarding-school lodgings, introducing herself simply and easily enough.

"I knew Mr. Thorne," she said, in the softest and most mournful voice she had at command. "I also know Mr. Wickham intimately; he, in fact, told me how sad and lonely you were here, and asked me to call on you. Now, will you let me sit here and chat with you for half an hour?"

And Lucy, with wonder-opened eyes at the lady's beauty and sweetness of manner, her distinguished appearance, her costly dress—although all of sombre black, the Empress Eugénie might have worn it in the palmiest days of the Empire—could only murmur the humblest of thanks, the most gracious of assurances that Miss Yorke's great kindness was appreciated as it ought to be by her friendless, lonely little self.

The half-hour's chat, however, prolonged itself into a close and earnest talk for at least three times that period.

Long before it came to an end, Lucy had found her way to a footstool at Ellinor's feet, and with clasped hands and swimming eyes was reiterating incoherent thanks for Ellinor's generous and unconditional offer of a home for life, or for at least so long as she liked to accept it.

"I am very lonely at times," said Miss Yorke; "my mother and sister are out of England the greater part of the year.

For reasons best known to himself, my uncle, the only other near relative I have, declines my society; if you will come and share my loneliness, I shall be very much obliged to you. Just now I am staying with the funniest old couple in the world, but as they do not interfere with my movements in the slightest degree, it suits me very well for a time. If you can put up with a small room, and the occasional attendance of one of my maids, I shall be only too delighted if you will come to me at once—to-day, to-morrow, when you will."

So as Lucy on her part was "only too delighted" to accept Miss Yorke's offer, her small possessions were speedily packed, and on the next day, with their owner, were deposited safely at Lady Moulsey's door, much to that worthy lady's astonishment.

Ellinor certainly did not go out of her way to make the matter clear to the old lady, who from an upper window had beheld the arrival of Miss Selwyn and her boxes.

"It is a friend of mine," she said, not troubling herself to raise her voice to meet the exigencies of Lady Moulsey's dull hearing. "Don't you know you said the other day how dull I must be here, and didn't I know any young people who would come on a visit?"

Lady Moulsey put her least deaf ear forward as one who asked to have a question repeated. She was an old-fashioned, countrified-looking person of about sixty years of age. Her face was very much wrinkled; as though time's plough had gone over it front-ways, corner-ways, back-ways, all ways, till not an unfurrowed quarter of an inch remained; her eyes were small and sunken, as was her mouth also. She was much given to stiff, rustling silk dresses, which were Ellinor's detestation, and owned to a perennial harsh, loud cough, equally disliked by that fastidious young person.

Ellinor did not bend her head one hair's-breadth nearer to the old lady's ear. Her lips moved, it is true, slowly, as though she were saying something emphatically and distinctly.

Lady Moulsey shook her head.

"I must be getting deaf with my right ear as well as my left," she said with a sigh, and visions of an ear-trumpet, an instrument against which she had an altogether unaccountable prejudice, began to rise up in her mind. "My dear, I haven't heard one word you have said."

And no wonder! for the simple reason that Ellinor's lips had not uttered one word save in appearance.

"For where was the use," the young lady said to herself, "of straining one's voice for a deaf old lady of sixty, when a make-believe answer did equally well?"

She had fallen into this habit of make-believe answering on the second day of her arrival at Lady Moulsey's. She endeavoured to initiate Lucy into the practice on the second day of her coming to the house.

Lucy looked pained and perplexed. She shook her head:

"Don't ask me to do it," she said; "I would far sooner strain my voice till it cracked."

Tenderness to and consideration for old people and children were noticeable traits in Lucy's character. When Lady Moulsey came into a room, she would fetch her a footstool, an elbow-cushion, or anything she might seem to need.

"Fido," Ellinor would say with a little smile, "if I dropped my pocket-handkerchief, I'm sure you would run from the other corner of the room to pick it up for me!"

But for all that, Lucy's soft, unassuming ways were not displeasing to the self-engrossed beauty. They made a charming and effective contrast to her own haughty and semi-contemptuous treatment of the world around her; were, so to speak, a tender little bit of neutral tint and shadow which threw into yet more bold relief her own pronounced and vivid colouring.

The chances are that had Lucy Selwyn possessed one tithe of little Edie's spirit; her aptness for retort; her tempestuous temper; life with Ellinor would have been an impossibility to her, or, if not an impossibility, a very hard matter indeed. As it was, far from being a hard matter, it was easy, pleasant, and, next to the early days of Rodney's love-making, by far the brightest portion of the three-and-twenty years she had already lived. Hers was a grateful, tender little heart; Ellinor's ready, and, to her way of thinking, magnificent bounty had won her body, soul, and spirit at one throw. To the end of her life her gratitude would be due to this Lady Bountiful, she felt, and do what she would, she could never do enough.

She was never weary of admiring Ellinor's beauty, her grace, her artistic instincts, her exquisitely designed and well-arranged dresses. All that she needed of companionship, of society, it seemed to her in those early days of their acquaintanceship, Ellinor Yorke could supply; and when, as occasionally it chanced, Ellinor sat a mute and apparently a sympathetic

listener while Lucy descanted softly on the dead Rodney's virtues and altogether superior excellences, it seemed to the tender-hearted girl that Providence had indeed dealt bountifully with her in giving her so blessed a home, so gracious a friend.

As for Ellinor, the arrangement, temporarily at any rate, suited her remarkably well, and she accorded to Lucy the magnificent sort of patronage she would have accorded to a beggar-girl had it suited her convenience to consort with such a one. Lucy, in her heart, occupied a place somewhere midway between her two maids; possibly she stood a step higher than the light-fingered, somewhat loquacious French maiden who manipulated her laces so delicately; possibly a step lower than the sedate, thoughtful Gretchen, who answered her mistress's troublesome letters and arranged her equally troublesome accounts. It may, however, be doubted whether Lucy would have outweighed the beautiful roan Uncle Hugh had presented his niece with at the commencement of the year, and which had been sent to ducal stables to ensure his proper treatment during the winter months. Most assuredly she would not, had the scales been taken in hand at the commencement of the London season, when Ellinor stood equipped and ready to outshine every other fair equestrienne in the Row.

On the whole, then, to Ellinor's mind the arrangement was satisfactory. It forwarded sundry matters on which she was specially bent just then; in fact, without this arrangement she did not quite see how they could have been forwarded at all. Why a young woman of her temperament, who could have secured a coronet for herself with a little less trouble than it takes most women to purchase a new bonnet, should so unreservedly have sacrificed her ambition at love's shrine and have counted Phil Wickham's heart worthy the diplomacy and finesse of a Machiavelli, adds yet another to the mountain of "nuts to crack" which are piled in readiness for the psychological philosopher of the future. The fact remained, and Ellinor did not spend her brains questioning the why and wherefore of it. She only said to her heart: "There he stands with his heart of ice while you are beating, burning, tortured, as you never have been before for living man. Very good. Before he is many days older his heart shall beat, and burn, and agonise, and then perhaps you, poor thing, will get a little rest. We shall see."

A clever diplomatist prefers to work with unconscious instruments. One brain guides a game better than two or three.

Lucy proved herself the most unconscious and willing of tools in Ellinor's hands.

A few days after her arrival in Grafton Street, she made her way up to Ellinor's dressing-room with an open letter in her hand, about which she earnestly besought Miss Yorke's counsel. The letter was from the solicitors who were named as executors to Rodney's will, and stated that they were awaiting her instructions as to the payment of the legacy (one thousand pounds) bequeathed to her by the late Mr. Rodney Thorne. Also they were instructed to make her an offer, on behalf of their client, Mrs. Thorne, of Thorne Hall, of full money value for the furniture, jewellery, and personal property, likewise bequeathed to her by the aforesaid deceased gentleman. The said value to be assessed by Miss Selwyn, or any person or persons she might choose to appoint.

Lucy was ready to cry over this letter. It brought before her mind only too vividly the possible footing on which she might have stood towards Rodney's mother, and the actual hard, formal relation which subsisted between them.

"What shall I do? Please advise me," she besought Ellinor when she saw that the latter's eye had reached the last word on the page.

Ellinor shook her head.

"My advice would not be worth having," she answered slowly. "Whatever I advised you in such a matter would be sure to be wrong. Have you no sensible, clear-headed friend—a lawyer, or some man accustomed to being consulted about difficulties?"

Lucy brightened considerably. Her thoughts naturally turned to the only man in her life—save Rodney—she had ever consulted on any matter small or great.

"There is Mr. Wickham," she said, "but really I don't know whether I ought to trouble him so much with my affairs. I know him so slightly after all, although somehow I seem to have known him for years."

"I know him not slightly but intimately," said Ellinor, intently scrutinising meantime the pretty lace-drapery her maid was exhibiting for her inspection, "and I know that he is the last man in the world to make a trouble of so small a matter as the giving advice upon a lawyer's letter."

Lucy brightened still more.

"I will write to him this very morning, and ask him to tell me what I ought to do. Perhaps he will come round and talk the letter over with me. There is something I should very much like to say to him about—about—" "Rodney's will," she was going to say, but the words would not come, so she said: "About this letter."

So before night Phil received a note in Lucy's pretty feminine hand, enclosing the letter, and saying how glad and grateful she would be if, when he was passing Grafton Street, he would call in and give her a word of advice.

CHAPTER XXII.

As might be imagined, Phil's answer to Lucy's note was to call on her immediately after breakfast on the following day. He had not been to Grafton Street since the night of his stormy interview with Ellinor about ten days previously. As he lifted the knocker, he wondered not a little whether Miss Yorke would choose to be present while he discussed business matters with Lucy, and, if so, how she would receive him.

He was shown into the same little morning-room as before, and there he found the two girls seated side by side on the sofa.

As he had felt confident would be the case, Ellinor neither by word nor look evinced the slightest embarrassment.

"Is it business—shall I go?" she asked, after shaking hands with Phil, and exchanging remarks about the frost that had set in, and what the hunting men in Berkshire would have to say to it.

"Oh, please—please, stay," implored Lucy; "you know everything so much better than I do. I am sure to say something silly and make myself ridiculous somehow, and you can tell me of it ever so much better than Mr. Wickham."

So Ellinor sat down again; the lawyer's letter was spread out before them, and the three went into committee upon it.

"Of course," said Phil with all the gravity and decision of his six-and-twenty years, "the first thing to be ascertained is your own wishes on the matter. No doubt you have already made up your mind what you would like done, Miss Selwyn."

"What I should like! Yes. But whether it is sensible and what ought to be done is another thing," answered Lucy hesitatingly, growing red and embarrassed as she spoke.

Then there followed a momentary pause.

Lucy evidently had something to say, and as evidently, not a little difficulty in saying it. She began and broke off, and began again, and stopped again.

"How would it be to let the thousand pounds remain as at present invested?" suggested Phil, anxious to help her out of her difficulty.

"Oh, it isn't the thousand pounds I'm thinking of; I don't care much what is done with that, one way or another," said Lucy vehemently, hurrying over her words as though afraid even to stop and take breath lest she might never get heart again to speak them. "It's just this, Mr. Wickham, that troubles me—that Rodney's mother should offer me money value for Rodney's things, which she knows must be beyond all price to me—all price in gold or silver, I mean—and yet, which I would give up to her in one minute if she would only come to me and hold out her hand in love and kindness."

Her words seemed to end almost in a sob.

Phil looked up at her with a little wonder and not a little admiration.

"I see—I begin to see; I didn't look at the matter in that light at first," he murmured.

"And why shouldn't Mrs. Thorne come to you and hold out her hand?" said Ellinor.

She asked the question honestly, wishing for a straightforward answer. It is true she had surmised possible reasons—she was too quick-witted not to have done so—for Mrs. Thorne's enmity to Lucy, but no one had told her whether or not her surmises were correct, and it had seemed to her, as she had thought over the matter, that Mrs. Thorne was showing an altogether unreasonable amount of personal dislike towards one whom circumstances had effectually prevented from inflicting any permanent injury upon her.

Phil echoed Ellinor's words, though not the tone in which she had uttered them.

"Why, indeed, should she not?" he said, darting a sudden angry look beneath his bent brows at Ellinor.

He felt it hard to keep his temper. All his old angry indignation against her rushed back upon him in full force. How dared she, beyond everyone else, sit there and ask such a question—she who, of right, should halve with Rodney the onus of his mad, desperate career? Why should justice be allowed to miscarry in this way, and this girl, so gentle and defenceless, have to bear the burthen of a deed she

had not done, while that other, the real culprit, went scot-free?

Ellinor caught his glance, read its meaning in a moment, and flung it back on him the next, with eyes that flashed and glowed by turns.

"Mrs. Thorne must surely be labouring under some mistake," she said, speaking slowly and distinctly, as though she were on a public platform. "Nothing but a mistake of some sort can account for her extraordinary conduct. You, who know her so intimately, Mr. Wickham, should make it a matter of duty to remove these misconceptions from her mind."

Phil felt bewildered. Was this a challenge, or did Miss Yorke's words mean something he was too stupid to understand?

"If Miss Selwyn commissioned me to such a duty, I would do it, although it might be with reluctance," he answered after a moment's pause.

Ellinor turned to Lucy.

"Lucy, don't you think Mr. Wickham would manage this matter admirably for you—far better than a paid lawyer, or any number of paid lawyers?" she asked, and now there was no mistaking the ring of defiance in her tone.

Lucy looked as she felt, thoroughly perplexed.

"I don't think I quite understand," she faltered. "If Mr. Wickham would go to Mrs. Thorne for me, and tell her exactly what I feel on the matter, I should be very, very grateful to him. You see, it is a thing I could not explain in a letter to a lawyer. How could I make him understand that the least of—of Rodney's things would be beyond price to me—a fishing-rod—a broken lead-pencil, even—but that—that I would give them every one to one who loved Rodney as I did, if—if only she would give me one little word of kindness."

Her voice grew weaker and weaker; there came a blinding rush of tears; she rose suddenly from her chair, and left the room.

Ellinor turned round and faced Phil as the door closed.

"Now that we are alone," she said, and her eyes flashed and burned once more, "you can say every word you have in your heart to say. Don't spare me, I beg of you."

"What I had to say I have said once and for all; there can be no need to repeat it," said Phil quietly.

"Then why do your eyes repeat what your lips see no occasion to utter?" queried Ellinor, her head thrown back, her face aglow. "Why do your eyes say to me, as they did a minute ago, 'This is your crime, not hers?' Do you suppose I am insensate and stupid, as well as heartless and cruel? Do you suppose, because I do not melt into tears every time Rodney's name is mentioned, and run out of the room, as that poor child did a minute ago, therefore I have forgotten the past, and the part I played in it?"

"I beg your pardon if I have wronged you, even in a look," was Phil's answer.

He was looking up wonderingly at her now. This was the woman he had declared had been sent into the world without a soul. Well, there was a something shining out of her eyes, curving her lips, colouring her cheeks, which, if not a soul, was an amazingly good imitation of one.

"I thank you for begging my pardon; you had wronged me. I told you I was penitent for the part I had played, and I was penitent—then. I am penitent now, in a different way, every hour of every day I live. I am sorry when I get up in the morning, sorry when I lie down to rest at night, sorry all the day long. Shall I tell you why—what for?"

She had risen now from the sofa on which she had been seated. Phil rose also, thinking it would possibly be better to bring the interview to a close. Ellinor's eyes, nearly on a level with his, seemed to search to their depths, and question, and doubt, and scorn him, all in a look.

She went on, her rich, full tones uttering as much scorn as her eyes.

"I am sorry—deeply, heartily, truly sorry every hour of every day I live, I say, because when I first met Rodney Thorne I did not put him out of my path as I would put any weak, troublesome, irritating animal—a barking dog, a mischievous kitten, a buzzing wasp. You pitied him, and laid his death to my charge. I bowed to your verdict, and you cut my heart and stabbed it, and made me think what a vile, heartless thing I must be. Now that you persist in casting my sin in my teeth, now that you would have it always before me, and have me for ever in the dust at your feet, I rebel against your verdict, I feel that you have wronged me far more than ever I wronged your weak, false friend. Let him be. No one could be his champion but one whose manhood was even less than his."

She gave Phil no chance for reply; as she finished speaking, with a slight bow to him, she left the room.

He stood for a few moments, silent and bewildered. Her words had seemed to smite him here, there, everywhere, like so many little winged darts of living flame. Somehow, as he had stood there listening to her, he had felt himself little more than a sounding-board to throw back her sentences as she uttered them, so sharp, so strong, so true they had seemed to him. He felt his friendship for Rodney dwindling, going, gone, his sympathy for Lucy growing less and less, under some new, strange undefinable feeling that appeared to have taken full possession of him.

What that feeling was he did not stop to ask himself. He shook himself together with an effort, found his hat, and made his way slowly out of the house.

Surely the genius of transformations must have been roaming free that morning. The Phil Wickham who came out of the house in Grafton Street, was not the Phil Wickham who had, so very shortly before, gone in.

COPTIC MONASTERIES IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

M. SONNINI'S experience of Egyptian monasteries was not such as render a further residence among the Coptic monks particularly desirable.

He decided, however, to visit another monastery, namely, that of Zaidi Suriana, which proved less objectionable than that of Zaidi el Baramoos, both as regards situation and cleanliness. His praise of the latter quality, is, however, decidedly faint, as he can only say that the monks here were less filthy than those he had previously seen. This monastery had been previously occupied by Syrian monks, whose ancient church was still standing, and rather handsome, being adorned with sculptures and paintings in fresco. It was, however, not used by the Copts, who had built for themselves a cruciform church in their own style. Here the monks had managed to make and cultivate a small garden—an oasis in the desert, wherein flourished some date-palms, olive-trees, and one almond-tree.

In one of the courts was an immense tamarind-tree, which the Copts regarded as of miraculous growth. They told how a certain St. Ephraim left his staff at the

gate of a brother hermit, whom he had come to visit. Apparently the holy men must have become so much absorbed in their devout converse, as to forget the lapse of time, for the staff not only took root, but threw out branches, and in the course of time became a stately tree, providing a feathery canopy of verdure, and cooling fruits for these saints of the desert.

Having spent a night in this monastery, and lightened his purse of its few remaining pieces of silver, M. Sonnini resolved to steer clear of any other desert convents, and kept his resolution; though, in passing by one called Amba Bishoi, he found the monks waiting for him at the gate, to importune him to enter and see the miraculous body of their saint, which was still as fresh and florid as on the day of his death. They expressed great astonishment and regret at his lack of interest in so wonderful a sight, but he attributed their discontent solely to disappointment at the loss of prospective alms.

A fourth monastery, that of Amba Monguar, especially dedicated to the very holy St. Macarius, lay about a league to the right. Fortunate was it for the traveller that he had resolved to avoid its shelter, for on the following day he received positive information that the identical Bedouin tribe which had previously robbed him, and had restored their booty with so much regret, were lying in wait for him near its walls, with about a hundred men, who were fully determined not to let their prey escape on this occasion. Happily, by changing his route he threw out their calculations, and moreover learnt a lesson in the true hospitality of the desert, for his new escort (aware of all that had befallen him, and that he could not even pay for the hire of their camels till he should return to Cairo to replenish his purse) brought him to their own camp, there loaded him with kindness, and the sheik took from a chest in his own tent a small bag of money, and pressed its acceptance upon him. With some hesitation Sonnini agreed to the loan of a few coins, which his generous host would not even suffer him to reckon, and when, a few days later, he was in a position to repay the loan, he found that, unknown to him, a sheep and various provisions had, by order of this generous Bedouin, been placed on board of his boat.

He was also greatly touched, on his return to Cairo, by the cordial joy displayed by Hussein at his safe return from an expedi-

tion which he declared to have been one of considerable danger; indeed, a report had been circulated to the effect that all the party had been murdered. Having happily escaped this untoward fate, Sonnini soon afterwards started on extended travels in Egypt, of which he has left voluminous records, including interesting notes on the natural history of a country which, a hundred years ago, could not be explored without much risk.

To us, the most interesting details of his travels are the glimpses of life in the desert monasteries, where the letter has so strangely and pitifully survived the spirit which gave them birth. At the time when monasticism was most flourishing in this land—i.e., in the time of St. Pachomius—the Coptic monasteries of the natron region numbered about five thousand brethren. They are now reduced to about three hundred.

The Copts of the present day number about one hundred and fifty thousand—i.e., about one fourteenth of the population of Egypt. They are said to derive their name from the ancient city of Coptos, in Upper Egypt, which seems to have been a centre of the innumerable Christians who sought refuge in the wilderness from the wickedness which reigned triumphant in the great city of Alexandria, so that the dreary Lybian Desert was literally honey-combed with the cells of such anchorites as St. Anthony, while more sociable spirits banded themselves together to form monastic communities, such as that in which St. Athanasius sought refuge during the troublous times of the Arian heresy. Again and again, in the course of the forty-six years during which he held the high office of Primate of Alexandria, was the good archbishop driven from his diocese, and compelled to seek protection with the saints of the desert, ere the triumph of his party enabled him to return and end his days in peace, in the midst of his devoted flock.

Certainly, of all remarkable phases in the spread of the new faith, none has been more extraordinary than the sudden fever for the life monastic which at that time possessed all ranks and conditions of men in Egypt, and which then, for the first time, appeared in Christian history. Buddhism had long possessed great monasteries, where hundreds of thousands, both of men and women, devoted themselves to striving after religious perfection, and in Egypt itself, the sect of the

Therapeutæ had formed a monastic colony near Alexandria, on a hill overlooking Lake Mareotis, where they lived most rigorously ascetic lives, only allowing themselves three meals a week of bread and water, and on high festivals luxuriating on the addition of a moderate allowance of salt and water-cresses. It is not known whether this strange sect was composed of heathen philosophers or very corrupt Jews, but they met for public worship every seventh day, and observed holy days, or rather nights, when they danced solemnly to an accompaniment of sacred music till morning, when they worshipped with their faces turned to the rising sun, and then dispersed, each to his solitary hut.

Even among Egypt's heathen priests there were certain who had adopted a solitary life of self-denial. As an outward symbol they shaved their beards and the crown of the head, and it was doubtless for fear of too closely assimilating to these that St. Athanasius forbade his monks to adopt the tonsure, or shave their beards.

To which of these examples the Christian monks owe their origin remains unknown; but once the idea was started, it found favour with a vast multitude, in the sudden reaction of first awakening from a life of unspeakable corruption, such as reigned in Alexandria. So we find that in Memphis and Babylon (on the Nile) the whole population seem to have taken monastic vows, while they continued diligently to follow their agricultural pursuits. One great city, formerly sacred to the fish Oxyrinchus, became wholly monastic, and the great temples of heathendom were transformed into monasteries wherein twenty thousand nuns and ten thousand monks sought a refuge from the world's wickedness. Twelve new churches were built for Christian worship, but in many cases the old temples were adapted to Christian use by very slight transformation of the heathen decorations; as, for instance, at the temple of Assebona in Nubia, where the figure of St. Peter, with his keys, was painted over that of one of the gods, so that Rameses the Second was shown bringing offerings to the Christian apostle! In like manner were Isis and Horus, the "mother and son" of Egyptian mythology, recognised as meet images for Christian reverence—in fact, the figure of Isis standing on the crescent-moon is supposed to have first suggested this representation of the Virgin mother as Queen of Heaven.

One island near Thebes was occupied by

a monastic sect, rigorous as the Trappists of later days. Here lived three thousand silent monks, who had vowed never to open their lips, save in prayer. Each community had its own distinctive rules, allowing wide room for difference. Some borrowed customs from heathenism, and thus gave birth to sects of Gnostics, who combined the old magic rites and study of astrology with some Christian practice, while strangest of all so-called Christian sects were the Ophites, who, borrowing from the mysteries of Isis and Osiris, Bacchus and Ceres, actually combined the old worship of the serpent with Christian rites, keeping a live serpent in a covered chest on the altar, in order that at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist the serpent might come forth and pass over the consecrated loaves, in token that the sacrifice was accepted!

Such was the strangely fermenting mass of religious thought and energy seething both within and without the fold of the Coptic Church within a comparatively short period of those early days when St. Mark himself ministered at a Christian shrine in Alexandria, and was thence dragged to the great Temple of Serapis, and offered life and pardon if he would but burn one little handful of incense to the gods. When his persecutors found that they could nowise shake the loyalty of the brave follower of Christ, they dragged him to the Bucelus, the State prison by the sea, and there left him till morning, when they returned to drag him about the city till merciful death ended his sufferings. But in the night, One had appeared to him in a glorious vision, bidding him be of good cheer, because his name was written in the Book of Life. When his foes had finished their work, faithful friends came to reclaim the loved body of their master, which they burnt with all honour, and of which they sent the ashes to be safely treasured at Venice.

Then followed times of trial and times of peace—days when the pagans persecuted the Christians, and more grievous times of retaliation, when the Christians in their turn became persecutors, as when Theophilus, Bishop of Alexandria, besieged and pillaged the Temple of Serapis, and proved so avaricious that the people would no longer call him "Lover of God," but Chrysolater, "the Worshipper of Gold." More evil still were the days when the bigotry and intolerance of Bishop Cyril made the name of Christian hateful to the heathen, and when bands of cruel and ignorant

monks, establishing themselves in the Temple of Serapis, sallied forth thence to plunder the wealthy Jews, and to disgrace the name they bore by such scenes of riot and bloodshed as that which resulted in the murder of the beautiful heathen maiden Hypatia.

Happily, on the other hand, from time to time, such men appeared as St. Anthony, who now and again travelled from his cell in Upper Egypt to cheer and comfort his brethren, when these were compelled to conceal themselves in the mines and caves round Alexandria, or to cheer the captives in their dungeons, and stand by the martyrs even in their last agonies. Even the heathen venerated a man of such renowned sanctity—so meek and humble, and withal so learned. So when he came to confound the teaching of the Arians, the pagans of Alexandria flocked to hear his eloquence.

Many a saintly name gleams, gem-like, from these pages of Church history. Nevertheless, gross darkness gradually overshadowed the scene, till at length, torn by violent disputes between the Arians and the Athanasians, and broken up into innumerable sects and parties, the Christians waxed weaker and weaker, till, in 1354, the conquering Arabs overran the land, and the persuasive influence of the sword won multitudinous followers for the green flag of Islam. Thus the Crescent triumphed over the Cross, Mahomedanism became the professed creed of the majority, and the Copts sank lower and lower in the scale, till they reached a condition of extreme degradation.

For a long period, both Copts and Jews were subject to various social disabilities. They were forbidden to ride either horse or mule, and if they chose to ride an ass, they might do so only on condition of facing the tail! They were subject to exorbitant taxation, and, as marks of their degradation, were compelled to wear black turbans, a cross weighing five pounds suspended from the neck, and, if they entered a public bath, must carry a bell, to give notice of their obnoxious presence.

Nowadays their social position is very much like that of their neighbours, and their singular talent for calculation leads to their being very generally employed in houses of business. In Cairo we noticed a voluntary mark of distinction on most of the Coptic houses, namely, an aloë-plant suspended above the door, and in some cases a small stuffed crocodile. These,

we were told, were charms to guard against the evil eye.

The supreme head of the Coptic Church is the Patriarch of Alexandria, who, however, lives at Cairo. He claims direct apostolic succession from St. Mark, the founder of the Egyptian Church, who is claimed as having been the first patriarch, and who is held in the same reverence as is accorded by the Western Church to St. Peter.

The other Coptic ecclesiastical orders are bishops, arch-priests, priests, deacons, and monks. The priests are all expected to marry, but the patriarch must be a celibate. He is invariably chosen, either by his predecessor, or else by lot, from among the monks of the convent of St. Anthony. There are twelve Coptic bishops, and the patriarch nominates the metropolitan of Abyssinia.

Though the Copts are remarkable for their general detestation of all other Christian sects, their principal tenets assimilate with those of the Latin Church. They acknowledge seven sacraments, enjoin auricular confession, and extreme unction. The latter is administered not only to persons at the point of death, but to penitents who have done meet penance after the commission of grievous sin. Evil spirits are exorcised "with candle, with book, and with bell." In celebrating the Holy Eucharist leavened bread is used, which has previously been dipped in wine. The Copts are most rigorous in their observance of fast days. Besides every Wednesday and Friday in the year, the Lenten fast is prolonged to fifty-five days, during which no manner of animal food is allowed—not even eggs, milk, or cheese. Some rites, however, appear to be borrowed either from their Moslem or Jewish neighbours. Thus, circumcision is deemed essential, in addition to baptism by immersion.

The frequent services of the Coptic Church are conducted in modern Coptic, that is to say, in Greek Coptic, which, although not spoken by the monks, is understood by them all. But the true Coptic, the language of the Pharaohs, is literally a dead tongue. Father Vansteb, who visited Siout in 1763, states that he there had the privilege of seeing the last Copt who understood his own language, and with whom it was to die. Being eighty years old, and very deaf, he was not able to give his visitor much useful information. Some portions of the service, such as the

Gospel, are first read in Coptic and then explained in Arabic, in order that it may be understood by the people.

Naturally, the lives of the saints occupy a large place in Coptic literature, and the place of highest honour next to the Blessed Virgin and St. Mark, is accorded to St. George—whether to the real St. George, England's patron saint, or to that evil George, also born in Cappadocia, who headed the Arian heresy in Alexandria, and from time to time superseded St. Athanasius in the archbishopric, is not clear. As others, besides Gibbon the historian, have confused these two, it may not be out of place to glance at their respective histories, and as England's St. George was the first martyr in the persecution of Diocletian, and canonised sixty years before him who should rather be known as "the ex-contractor of Cappadocia," we will glance first at his history.

When only twenty years of age, he was summoned as a military tribune to a Council called by the Emperor to decide how most effectually to crush the Christians. Already the young noble had secretly joined the despised sect of the Nazarenes, and now, in the very presence of the cruel Emperor, he acknowledged his faith, and pleaded for the persecuted people. Wonder filled all present, as they looked on the inspired beauty of that young face, but no pity could stay the cruel tortures to which he was subjected. Nevertheless, he was miraculously preserved through all, and there followed signs and wonders which led to the conversion of many.

Finally, he was beheaded; but even after death, he reappeared to encourage warriors, as when, during the Crusades, he appeared to Cœur de Lion and Godfrey de Bouillon, and so acquired his immortal fame as the patron of chivalry. So, very quickly, the legend took form which materialised his conflicts with spiritual foes, and transformed them into the Dragon of the Lybian Desert—so quickly, indeed, that the Emperor Constantine had a painting of St. George and the Dragon on the porch of his palace at Constantinople, within a very short period of his death, and also dedicated a church, near the sea, to his honour.

About the time of his martyrdom, there was born that other George, whom Gibbon has identified with England's patron saint, and who, he states, was employed on the commissariat, where he contrived to enrich

himself considerably at the expense of the army. On his becoming a convert to Arianism, he seems to have tried "feeding the flock" in another sense, but with equal advantage to himself, for, having been raised to the archiepiscopate by Constantius, he speedily became noted for the frightful cruelty with which he persecuted the Athanasians—pillaging their houses, burning their churches, torturing and killing without mercy. Men were scourged to death, and women who refused to communicate at the Arian altar were also stripped and scourged; the consecrated elements were forced into their mouths, and they were beaten on the face till none could recognise them. Such was the gentle shepherd of the flock who, happily, was at last deposed and imprisoned by the Emperor Julian, and the people—Christians and pagans alike thirsting for vengeance—broke open the prison doors and murdered the vile Archbishop, whose body they dragged triumphantly through the city, and cast into the sea. The Arians, of course, pronounced this righteous retribution to be a "martyrdom"; so they canonised their bad patriarch, and he has ever since contrived to absorb much of the reverence due to the true saint.

Which of the two is revered by the Copts I cannot say. But I know that we were much interested when visiting a very ancient Greek church in Cairo, dedicated to St. George, by watching a sisterhood of Latin nuns, who, like ourselves, were doing a little sight-seeing. They were of very varied nationality, ranging from pure negro to very fair Maltese, and the kind old priests did the honours of the saint with charming courtesy, even producing his veritable head for inspection. Most of the sisters kissed it reverently; but one quietly whispered to me that it could not possibly be his head, as the head of the true saint—decapitated by order of Diocletian—was hopelessly lost, and no one could tell where it was.

So we left the very interesting old church, with the precious though dubious head, and drove through old Cairo till we reached a Coptic church, more than a thousand years old, built over a cave where the Holy Family rested on their flight into Egypt. It was indescribably dirty and dreary, and the old priest and his wife and little daughter were all in harmony with the church, and seemed to us strangely typical of the decaying Coptic Church of Egypt.

TURNING AIR INTO WATER.

It has not yet been done; but the following telegrams, received on the 9th and 16th of April, 1883, from Cracow, by the Paris Academy of Sciences, show that chemists have come very near doing it. "Oxygen completely liquefied; the liquid colourless like carbonic acid." "Nitrogen liquefied by explosion; liquid colourless." Thus the two elements that make up atmospheric air have actually been liquefied, the successful operator being a Pole, Wroblewski, who had worked in the laboratory of the French chemist, Cailletet, learnt his processes, copied his apparatus, and then, while Cailletet, who owns a great iron-foundry down in Burgundy, was looking after his furnaces, went off to Poland, and quietly finished what his master had for years been trying after. Hence heart-burnings, of which more anon, when we have followed the chase up to the point where Cailletet took it up. I use this hunting metaphor, for the liquefaction of gases has been for modern chemists a continual chase, as exciting as the search for the philosopher's stone was to the old alchemists.

Less than two hundred and fifty years ago, no one knew anything about gas of any kind. Pascal was among the first who guessed that air was "matter" like other things, and therefore pressed on the earth's surface with a weight proportioned to its height. Torricelli had made a similar guess two years before, in 1645. But Pascal proved that these guesses were true by carrying a barometer to the top of the Puy de Dôme near Clermont. Three years after, Otto von Guericke invented the air-pump, and showed at Magdeburg his grand experiment—eight horses pulling each way, unable to detach the two hemispheres of a big globe out of which the air had been pumped. Then Mariotte in France, and Boyle in England, formulated the "Law," which the French call Mariotte's, the English Boyle's, that gases are compressible, and that their bulk diminishes in proportion to the pressure. But electricity with its wonders threw pneumatics into the background; and, till Faraday, nothing was done in the way of verifying Boyle's Law except by Van Marum, a Haarlem chemist, who, happening to try whether the Law applied to gaseous ammonia, was astonished to find that under a pressure of six atmospheres that gas was suddenly changed into a colourless liquid. On Van

Marum's experiment Lavoisier based his famous generalisation that all bodies will take any of the three forms, solid, fluid, gaseous, according to the temperature to which they are subjected—i.e., that the densest rock is only a solidified vapour, and the lightest gas only a vaporised solid. Nothing came of it, however, till that wonderful bookbinder's apprentice, Faraday, happened to read Mrs. Marcet's *Conversations* while he was stitching it for binding, and thereby had his mind opened; and, managing to hear some of Sir H. Davy's lectures, wrote such a good digest of them, accompanied by such a touching letter—"Do free me from a trade that I hate, and let me be your bottle-washer"—that the good-hearted Cornishman took the poor blacksmith's son, then twenty-one years old, after eight years of book-stitching, and made him his assistant, "keeping him in his place," nevertheless, which, for an assistant in those days, meant feeding with the servants, except by special invitation.

This was in 1823, and next year Faraday had liquefied chlorine, and soon did the same for a dozen more gases, among them protoxide of nitrogen, to liquefy which, at a temperature of fifty degrees Fahrenheit, was needed a pressure of sixty atmospheres—sixty times the pressure of the air—i.e., nine hundred pounds on every square inch. Why, the strongest boilers, with all their thickness of iron, their rivets, their careful hammering of every plate to guard against weak places, are only calculated to stand about ten atmospheres; no wonder then that Faraday, with nothing but thick glass tubes, had thirteen explosions, and that a fellow-experimenter was killed while repeating one of his experiments. However, he gave out his "Law," that any gas may be liquefied if you put pressure enough on it. That "if" would have left matters much where they were had not Bussy, in 1824, argued: "Liquid is the middle state between gaseous and solid. Cold turns liquids into solids; therefore, probably cold will turn gases into liquids." He proved this for sulphurous acid, by simply plunging a bottle of it in salt and ice; and it is by combining the two, cold and pressure, that all subsequent results have been attained. How to produce cold, then, became the problem; and one way is by making steam. You cannot get steam without borrowing heat from something. Water boils at two hundred and twelve degrees Fahrenheit, and then you may go on heating and heating till one thousand

degrees more heat have been absorbed before steam is formed. The thermometer, meanwhile, never rises above two hundred and twelve degrees, all this extra heat becoming what is called latent, and is probably employed in keeping asunder the particles which when closer together form water. The greater the expansive force, the more heat becomes latent or used up in this way. This explains the paradox that, while the steam from a kettle-spout scalds you, you may put your hand with impunity into the jet discharged from a high-pressure engine. The high-pressure steam, expanding rapidly when it gets out of confinement, uses up all its heat (makes it all "latent") in keeping its particles distinct. It is the same with all other vapours: in expanding they absorb heat, and, therefore, produce cold; and, therefore, as many substances turn into steam at far lower temperatures than water does, this principle of "latent heat," invented by Black, and, after long rejection, accepted by chemists, has been very helpful in the liquefying of gases by producing cold.

The simplest ice-machine is a hermetically-sealed bottle connected with an air-pump. Exhaust the air, and the water begins to boil and to grow cold. As the air is drawn off, the water begins to freeze; and if—by an ingenious device—the steam that it generates is absorbed into a reservoir of sulphuric acid, or any other substance which has a great affinity for watery vapour, a good quantity of ice is obtained. This is the practical use of liquefying gases; naturally, they all boil at temperatures much below that of the air, in which they exist in the vaporised state that follows after boiling. Take, therefore, your liquefied gas; let it boil and give off its steam. This steam, absorbing by its expansion all the surrounding heat, may be used to make ice, to cool beer-cellars, to keep meat fresh all the way from New Zealand, or—as has been largely done at Suez—to cool the air in tropical countries. Put pressure enough on your gas to turn it into a liquid state, at the same time carrying away by a stream of water the heat that it gives off in liquefying. Let this liquid gas into a "refrigerator," where it boils and steams, and draws out the heat; and then by a sucking-pump drive it again into the compressor, and let the same process go on ad infinitum, no fresh material being needed, nothing, in fact, but the working of the pump. Sulphurous acid is

a favourite gas, ammonia is another ; and—besides the above practical uses—they have been employed in a number of startling experiments.

Perhaps the strangest of these is getting a bar of ice out of a red-hot platinum crucible. The object of using platinum is simply to resist the intense heat of the furnace in which the crucible is placed. Pour in sulphurous acid and then fill up with water. The cold raised by vaporising the acid is so intense that the water will freeze into a solid mass. Indeed, the temperature sometimes goes down to more than eighty degrees below freezing. A still more striking experiment is that resulting from the liquefying of nitrous oxide—protoxide of nitrogen, or laughing-gas. This gas needs, as was said, great pressure to liquefy it at an ordinary temperature. At freezing-point only a pressure of thirty atmospheres is needed to liquefy it. It then boils if exposed to the air, radiating cold—or, rather, absorbing heat—till it falls to a temperature low enough to freeze mercury. But it still, wonderful to say, retains the property which, alone of all the gases, it shares with oxygen—of increasing combustion. A match that is almost extinguished burns up again quite brightly when thrust into a bag of ordinary laughing-gas ; while a bit of charcoal, with scarcely a spark left in it, glows to the intensest white heat when brought in contact with this same gas in its liquid form, so that you have the charcoal at, say, two thousand degrees Fahrenheit, and the gas at some one hundred and fifty degrees below zero. Carbonic acid gas is just the opposite of nitrous oxide, in that it quenches fire and destroys life ; but, when liquefied, it develops a like intense cold. Liquefy it and collect it under pressure, in strong cast-iron vessels, and then suddenly open a tap and allow the vapour to escape. In expanding, it grows so cold—or, strictly speaking, absorbs, makes latent, so much heat—that it produces a temperature low enough to turn it into fog and then into frozen fog, or snow. This snow can be gathered in iron vessels, and mixed with ether it forms the strongest freezing mixture known, turning mercury into something like lead, so that you can beat the frozen metal with wooden mallets and can mould it into medals and such-like.

Amid these and such-like curious experiments, we must not forget the "Law," that the state of a substance depends on its temperature—solid when it is frozen hard

enough, liquid under sufficient pressure, gaseous when free from pressure and at a sufficiently high temperature. But though first Faraday, and then the various inventors of refrigerating-machines—Carré, Tellier, Natterer, Thilorier—succeeded in liquefying so many gases, hydrogen and the two elements of the atmosphere resisted all efforts. By plunging oxygen in the sea, to the depth of a league, it was subjected to a pressure of four hundred atmospheres, but there was no sign of liquefaction. Again, Berthelot fastened a tube, strong and very narrow, and full of air, to a bulb filled with mercury. The mercury was heated until its expansion subjected the air to a pressure of seven hundred and eighty atmospheres—all that the glass could stand—but the air remained unchanged. Cailletet managed to get one thousand pressures by pumping mercury down a long, flexible steel tube upon a very strong vessel, full of air ; but nothing came of it, except the bursting of the vessel, nor was there any more satisfactory result in the case of hydrogen.

One result, at any rate, was established—that there is no law of compression like that named after Boyle or Mariotte, but that every gas behaves in a way of its own, without reference to any of the others, each having its own "critical point" of temperature, at which, under a certain pressure, it is neither liquid nor gaseous, but on the border-land between the two, and will remain in this condition so long as the temperature remains the same. Hence, air being just in this state of gaseo-liquid, the first step towards liquefying it must be to lower its temperature, and so get rid of its vapour by increasing its density. The plan adopted, both by Cailletet in Paris, and by Raoul Pictet (heir of a great scientific name) in Geneva, was to lower the temperature by letting off high-pressure steam. This had been so successful in the case of carbonic acid gas as to turn the vapour into snow ; and in 1877 Cailletet pumped oxygen into a glass tube, until the pressure was equal to three hundred atmospheres. He then cooled it to four degrees Fahrenheit below zero, and, opening a valve, let out a jet of gaseous vapour, which, while expanding, caused intense cold, lowering the temperature some three hundred degrees, and turning the jet of vapour into fog. Here, then, was a partial liquefaction, and the same was effected in the case of nitrogen. Pictet

did much the same thing. Having set up at Geneva a great ice-works (his refrigerating agency being sulphurous acid in a boiling state), he had all the necessary apparatus, and was able to subject oxygen to a pressure of three hundred and twenty atmospheres, and by means of carbonic acid boiling in vacuo, to cool the vessel containing it down to more than two hundred degrees Fahrenheit below zero. He could not watch the condition in which the gas was; but it was probably liquefied, for, when a valve was suddenly opened, it began to bubble furiously, and rushed out in the form of steam. Pictet thought he had also succeeded in liquefying hydrogen, the foggy vapour of the jet being of a steely grey colour; for hydrogen has long been suspected to be a metal, of which water is an oxide, and hydrochloric acid a chloride. Nay, some solid fragments came out with the jet of vapour, and fell like small shot on the floor, and at first the sanguine experimenter thought he had actually solidified the lightest of all known substances. This, however, was a mistake; it was some portion of his apparatus which had got melted. Neither had the liquefaction of oxygen or nitrogen been actually witnessed, though the result had been seen in the jet of foggy vapour.

Cailletet was on the point of trying his experiment over again in vacuo, so as to get a lower temperature, when the telegrams from Wroblewski showed that the Pole had got the start of him. Along with a colleague, Obszewski, Cailletet's disloyal pupil set ethylene boiling in vacuo, and so brought the temperature down to two hundred and seventy degrees Fahrenheit below zero. This was the lowest point yet reached, and it was enough to turn oxygen into a liquid a little less dense than water, having its "critical point" at about one hundred and sixty-eight degrees Fahrenheit below zero. A few days after, nitrogen was liquefied by the same pair of experimenters, under greater atmospheric pressure at a somewhat higher temperature.

The next thing is to naturally ask: What is the use of all this? That remains to be proved. The most unlikely chemical truths have often brought about immense practical results. All that we can as yet say is, that there is now no exception to the law that matter of all kinds is capable of taking the three forms, solid, aqueous, gaseous.

The French savans are not content with saying this. They are very indignant at

Wroblewski stealing Cailletet's crown just as it was going to be placed on the Frenchman's head. It was sharp practice, for all that a scientific discoverer has to look to is the fame which he wins among men. The Academy took no notice of the interloping Poles, but awarded to Cailletet the Lacaze Prize, their secretary, M. Dumas, then lying sick at Cannes, expressing their opinion in the last letter he ever wrote. "It is Cailletet's apparatus," says M. Dumas, "which enabled the others to do what he was on the point of accomplishing. He, therefore, deserves the credit of invention; the others are merely clever and successful manipulators. What has been done is a great fact in the history of science, and it will link the name of Cailletet with those of Lavoisier and Faraday." So far M. Dumas, who might, one fancies, have said something for Pictet, only a fortnight behind Cailletet in the experiment which practically liquefied oxygen. His case is quite different from Wroblewski's, for he and Cailletet had been working quite independently, just as Leverrier and Adams had been when both discovered the new planet Neptune. Such coincidences so often happen when the minds of men are turned to the same subject. Well, the scientific world is satisfied now that the elements of air can be liquefied; but I want to see the air itself liquefied, as what it is—a mechanical, not a chemical compound. For from such liquefaction one foresees a great many useful results. You might carry your air about with you to the bottom of mines or up in balloons; you might even, perhaps, store up enough by-and-by to last for a voyage to the moon.

GIVING IN MARRIAGE.

COME, let us sit together for a space,

In this still room remote from friendly mirth,

Afar from light and music, face to face,

Each unto each the dearest thing on earth.

Love, they have left us, our two bonny brides,

Our tall grave girl, our winsome laughing pet;

Ah me! How wide the chasm that divides

Our life from theirs; how far their feet are set

From the calm path they trod with us so long.

How we shall miss them, we who loved them so,

On winter nights when winds are blowing strong,

On summer mornings, when the roses blow.

But—happy but—we still clasp hand in hand,

Eye still meets eye, and true hearts understand.

Love, they have left us empty of the mirth

That cheered our homestead while they sojourned

here;

Yea, they have left us lonely on the earth,

Lone, but together, solitude most dear;

Ah, God, go with them to the stranger-nests,

That love has built for them and theirs to come,

God keep all warm and living in their breasts

Love's holy flame, the altar-fire of home.

Dear, they have left us ; we no longer hold
 The first, best place, however leal each heart,
 Yet have we treasure left, refined gold,
 Love's sterling ore, without its baser part.
 The wide old house has lost its nestling birds,
 But we are left. Ah, love, what need of words !

CHRONICLES OF ENGLISH COUNTIES.

NORFOLK.

IN Norfolk history is strongly accentuated. No striking features present themselves in its scenery or in its history. At first sight what is more dull and uninteresting than this wide, flat country with its margin of low, sandy coast ? And its records, dozens of volumes full of the chronicles of manors, with a notice here and there how some Brown, of Topthorpe, assumed an augmentation of his coat in the year of grace one thousand odd !

And yet a small acquaintance with the country will disclose a certain charm and attraction peculiar to itself. The coast—with its low, sandy bluffs, protecting little fishing-villages that crouch beneath ; with its wide-stretching dunes, or denes, according to local parlance ; with its lonely lighthouses looking over the less lonely sea—has a fine sea-salt flavour about it even where most dreary and bare. There is no hard and fast line between land and water. Broad rivers with placid even flow and bordered by reeds and bulrushes ; sippy lands and marshy pastures, that a high spring-tide will turn into a lake again ; the broad, with its shivering margin of feathery growths and its placid, mirror-like surface within—everything seems of the water, watery. The sky has a gleam in it as of water, with strange plays of colour from the scudding sea-drift ; white sails dart and gleam among the dank marshes, and we feel that the wild northern sea has still a hold of us, far away as it may lurk beyond the low, watery horizon. But there is a shore to this watery land, lines of low hills, with trees scattered along the ridge, and yellow cornstacks that glisten in the tempered sunshine. Then we come upon snatches of river scenes of more inland aspect, bits of "Old Crome" in quiet reaches, with mills and homesteads clustered under the shelter of fine old trees. And then, perhaps, we come to a deep, loamy country shut up among trees and hedgerows, with damp, shaded highways running between long park-palings, where innumerable wood-pigeons whirr among the trees, and half-eaten turnips lie unconsidered by the road-

side, denoting that this is a land of plenty for all kinds of beasts and fowls. Here the free-spoken hardy sea and river folk are no longer seen, and instead we have the old huckster-woman with her cart and donkey, and her red handkerchief tied round her bonnet ; or the pig-jobber rattling by in his market cart, or the half-gipsy horse-dealer with a string of young colts.

Then there is the little town with its open space, half market-place and half village-green ; the church looking on from its thickly peopled graveyard—a church with a quaint old Tudor porch, and within the stiff effigies of long-forgotten worthies in ruffs and scarlet gowns ; and standing back among trees and shrubs are the comfortable red-brick houses of the ruling society of the place, while the town finally dies away into the country again in rows of mud and plaster cottages, with here and there some fantastic abode in which the eccentric genius of its proud proprietor has found vent.

The eccentricity and character which mark the inland-dwelling people of Norfolk, with a humour shy and evanescent that can hardly be rendered in words, are very much due, no doubt, to the isolated nature of the East Anglian land, which seems never to have forgotten its once independent existence, and has preserved its feudal constitution and ancient usages with faithful tenacity.

It is strange outside the gateway of some half-feudal castle to hear the boys crying out "Larges, larges !" as they importune the passing stranger, exactly as if they were part of the crowd that had just broken up from some tournament. And there is a certain magniloquence of diction often to be noticed among the people. A thunder-storm they call a tempest, and the smallest patch of level ground is dubbed a plain. The birds, too, have their own peculiar names in Norfolk. The barley-bird is the nightingale, because it comes, or used to come, at the time of barley-sowing. The bloodolph is the bullfinch, the caddaw the jackdaw. The bittern is known as the bottlebump, and the thrush bears the more poetic name of mavish. The goldfinch, again, is known as King Harry redcap ; and the blackcap bears the same royal title with its characteristic difference. The chaffinch, too, is known as the spink, while the March-bird is not the sea-blue bird of the poet, but the common frog, whose most emphatic notes are heard during that month.

Then, in addition to his local phrases, the Norfolk peasant has a certain thickness of utterance, as if the tongue were too large for the mouth, so that his speech is often difficult of comprehension by a stranger. But he is generally kind and courteous, with a natural unstudied politeness which makes a stranger an object of interest and good-will. Ethnologically, our Norfolk man is rather puzzling. He ought to be an example of pure Scandinavian blood—a mixture, that is, of Anglian and Danish—blue-eyed, light-haired, tall, and lithe; like the Angles, who were called Angels in the Roman market-place. And, no doubt, here and there you may find such a type; but a more prevailing one, in many parts, is that of a dark-complexioned people, rather small in stature, dark and hairy, with black locks naturally curled and wavy.

Likely enough the wide seaboard and exposed coast of East Anglia, which seemed to invite invasion, have been the means of preserving the ancient settlers on the land through the stress of subsequent invasions and conquests. Hardy colonists from the north had settled upon the sandy shores of the inlets and fiords, scarcely yet abandoned by the waves, uninviting to any but the true children of the sea; had settled there in friendly guise, while still the stern rule of Rome kept order through the land. The amicable relations that existed between the cultivators of the soil and the seafaring settlers on the coast, seem to have softened the horrors of the subsequent Anglo-Saxon invasion, seeing that these came rather among kinsmen than among foes. There is strong reason, too, for believing that, as the Roman rulers found the village system, such as it existed among all the settled races in the land, an excellent fiscal organisation, and left it untouched, so also the Angles and Saxons were often satisfied with becoming the lords and masters of the village communities, and left the actual cultivators of the soil to labour for the benefit of their conquerors. And the Norman, coming after, with his manorial system and its belongings, changed the name of the community without vitally altering its constitution.

Thus, perhaps, it happened that East Anglia was never very strong under the rule of its petty kings; it had more cultivators than fighting-men, and became successively the prey to stronger powers. Then came the Danes and wrought their will over the whole country, so says the

Saxon chronicle. But here again it is not quite certain that the Danes did not find many kinsmen and adherents among the actual inhabitants of the land. The whole coast population seems cheerfully to have joined with the Danes in an attack by sea upon Exeter, and the East Anglian may have considered the Western man—and the prejudice has continued to quite recent times—more of a foe than the Dane.

The isolation of East Anglia appears also in its religious history. It was not from Canterbury that Christianity came to it, but from Burgundy, whence came Felix with his band of missionary monks, or earlier still, perhaps, from Ireland and the primitive Celtic Church. It was these Irish missionaries, perhaps, who brought with them the way of building the strange round towers which are scattered here and there along the coast. Others again ascribe the round towers to the Danes, and point to the fact that the towers are generally in the vicinity of old Danish settlements.

In churches of all the different eras of Gothic architecture, Norfolk is particularly rich, and, before the Reformation, the county was thickly studded with priories. Almost equal in popular estimation to the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury, was that of Our Lady of Walsingham. And the devout pilgrim could hardly boast himself an accomplished palmer, unless he had visited these two great English shrines, as well as the tomb of St. James, at Compostella, in Spain.

"I have heard of Saynt Iames," says Erasmus, in an old English translation of his *Peregrinations*, "but I pray you describe to me the Kyngdome of Walsyngham." "At the uttermost part of all England," is the reply. And the description is not far from accurate at the present day, for Walsingham is a long way from everywhere, and a pilgrimage there involves a considerable sacrifice of time. But in the old days when pilgrims travelled mostly afoot, there was a continual stream of them. From the south they came through Newmarket, Brandon, and Fakenham, by a track still known as the Palmers' Way. From the north and the fen country the track crossed the Wash by Long Sutton, and passed through Lynn, where a beautiful lady chapel, with elaborate groined roof, is said to have been built of the benefactions of pilgrims. Another great road led through Norwich and Attlebridge, by Bec Hospital, where lodging for thirteen poor pilgrims was ready every night.

There is little to show of the once famous temple of Walsingham. A ruined chancel arch, a gateway, and some fragmentary cloisters are all that remain of the grand church which fell into ruin ere it was completely finished. Erasmus, just before the Reformation, found the church still in progress, the windows yet unglazed and the cold wind sweeping through the newly-built aisles. But the grand church was the outer casket only; the original shrine was contained in a little wooden chapel within the church, "on eyther syde a lyttle door where the pilgrims goe through," and within was the image of Our Lady, and the shrine all blazing with gold and jewels of richness most marvellous; and everything sparkling to the bewildered gaze in the light of innumerable twinkling tapers, while the fumes of fragrant incense added to the half-intoxication of the scene. Outside was another little chapel full of marvels, and, before the chapel, a little house, where there was a couple of pits, both full of water to the brim. The wells still remain pure and cold through all these changes, and these are the famous wishing-wells of Walsingham, that probably were the first objects of pilgrimage long before even the faith of Christ was known in the land.

But while Walsingham is far to seek, it lies within the richest, pleasantest part of Norfolk, the little river Stiffkey—how can we give a river such a barbarous name?—running through a pleasant wooded vale; and there is the ruined hall of Stiffkey, built by Sir Nicholas Bacon, to bound the vista. Holkham, too, is close by, the proud desmesne of the Cokes, clever lawyers, mighty cattle-breeders, great farmers; and Burnham Thorpe, in whose rectory-house was born the great English sea-captain, Horatio Nelson. All this coast, indeed, is redolent with memories of great sea-captains. Sir John Narford, Sir Christopher Mynnes, Sir Cloudesley Shovel, Lord Hawke—all these, and many others, were Norfolk men.

Then there is Cley, once a haven on the coast, but now some little distance inland, for the sea is receding on this northern shore of Norfolk. Cley was a haven of refuge in the year 1406, when a storm-tossed galley put in there—a galley filled with people of quality, whom the stout fisherfolk of Cley would not suffer to depart when the storm abated. The young prince of Scotland proved to be one of the captives—the poet prince, whose muse had surely never found

expression but for the seclusion of the long captivity that he owed to these men of Cley. A sturdy, somewhat combative race are the fishermen all along this dangerous coast, as at Sherringham, a fishing-village, whose men have a time-honoured feud with the fishermen of Yarmouth.

More to the west, where the coast takes a deep indent, and where the people of Hunstanton, from their red cliffs, can watch the setting sun sinking into the waves, the sea has retreated still farther, partly moved thereto by the dykes and banks that have been raised by acquisitive humanity. Thus there is Castle Rising, under whose walls once the royal navy of a remote period might have been moored, while now the great lonely Norman keep looks out over marshes and pastures to the long, high sea-line. As the old rhyme says:

Rising was a market town
When Lynn was but a barren down.

But Lynn, for a parvenu town, has an air of very respectable antiquity, rather Dutch in its quaint mixture of ships and houses, and with the stir of modern progress in the midst of much that has an antique flavour, such as the fine old priory church of St. Margaret's, with its twin towers. As the key of East Anglia on the north, and guarding the passes to the fens, Lynn has always had a certain importance, and acquired the royal patronage and its royal title in consequence. From Lynn King John set out on his perilous and disastrous march across the Wash, and the stern-faced men who set out from Lynn with Eugene Aram, in Hood's poem, had all the mists and floods of the fen country before them on their melancholy march to the north countrie.

And here we are not far from the Walpole country, that stiff and stately Houghton, which the great minister—notorious, perhaps, rather than great—raised in his pride, to worthily house the race he had raised to distinction.

The Walpoles, indeed, are racy of the soil, and take their name from the pair of villages which, in their turn, were called after the old Roman bank, or wall, that protected the adjacent lands. Some black little tarn among the bogs gave the hamlets their distinctive title, the Wall-pool, while other villages, Walton and Walsoken, on the same line of embankment, perpetuate the memory of the work of the Roman engineers. It is recorded that Walpole was once the passage over the sands to the Lincolnshire coast, two

miles away, but now a broad tract of reclaimed land stretches between the village and the sea. But with Houghton the Walpoles had been connected for many generations. And there, towards the close of the seventeenth century, might young Robert Walpole be met with, daily riding his pony to and from Massingham village, where he was taught by the village pedant, in a room over the porch of the village church. When his political career had closed, Sir Robert gladly threw himself into the life of the country squire. He might have been seen driving about his estate in a gig of ponderous appearance, with the family arms and the Insignia of the Bath emblazoned on either side. Building and hunting occupied his time till he was summoned to join his ancestors in the family vault. A son and grandson succeeded him, the latter soon dissipating what his ancestor had accumulated with so much pains. Racing, hawking, bull-baiting—every expensive amusement was pursued by the young Earl with feverish, restless eagerness. The Houghton Meeting at Newmarket is a solitary memorial of his devotion to horse-racing, and he is credited in local annals with introducing the present breed of greyhounds and the practice of coursing among the sporting men of Norfolk and Newmarket.

The premature death of his grandson, without lawful progeny, brought Horace Walpole the title of Earl, for which he had no particular relish, in his old age, and an encumbered estate, which brought him more trouble than profit. He had little sympathy with the race of country squires, of which the Walpoles had been the embodiment—perhaps he was not even of their blood—and Horace never even visited Houghton after it came into his possession till, in the year 1797, his body was taken to the damp and chilly mausoleum of the Walpoles in St. Martin's Church, at Houghton. A resting-place in St. James's, Piccadilly, with a marble urn to mark the spot, and an angel of quality weeping at the side, would have been more appropriate to the career of such a thorough lover of the town and the fashion.

It would be an endless task to enter into the family history of the people of distinction in Norfolk. Nowhere is the ground more thickly studded with parks and halls; nowhere has the manorial system taken deeper root, or been more universally applied. But one family deserves mention, though long extinct, not for its own

importance, but as having preserved to posterity through a series of lucky accidents a vivid, lifelike chronicle of the events of the dark and dubious years of the Wars of the Roses and the subsequent period.

The Pastons were small country gentry in origin, taking their name from a village near the coast of Norfolk. Close to Paston are the remains of Broomholm Priory, situate by the seashore, with a flat, unbroken coast around, conspicuous afar from sea and land, the only building of importance for miles round about, and used by the fishermen as a sea-mark. The holy rood of Broomholm was noted as a wonder-working relic, and many of the pilgrims to Walsingham turned aside to visit its shrine. With the monks of Broomholm the Pastons were always on good terms, and by acting as stewards and agents for their worldly possessions, acquired some little money, as well as some influence outside their own small local circle. The first Paston of note was a judge of the earlier part of the reign of Henry the Sixth. One of his sons was a law-student at Clifford's Inn; another lived upon the family acres, and married the daughter of a neighbouring squire, who became the chief letter-writer of the family. At times her husband would be busy with his court leet, at others he would don his harness and sally forth to the rendezvous of an army. Wherever he might be, gentle Margaret was continually keeping him informed of the doings of the neighbourhood. John being in London ill, his mother, the judge's wife, vowed an image of wax of his own weight, and that Margaret, the wife, should go on pilgrimage to Walsingham, and to St. Leonard's, Norwich. One of the Pastons got wounded with an arrow at the Battle of Barnet, and messages and letters passed to and fro all as commonplace and matter-of-fact as you please.

The most romantic part of the Paston history is the account of how Sir John Paston became executor to the noted Sir John Fastolf, the builder of Caistor Castle, which, on Sir John's death, was claimed by the Duke of Norfolk on some feudal pretext. The Pastons held the castle against the Duke, and this siege of Caistor Castle was a little bit of private war, mixed up with a fight of writs and processes at law. Finally the Duke prevailed and gained the castle, and Paston was put to his trial for the death of those slain in the siege, but managed to slip through the meshes of the law, and making his peace with the Duke, all became

smooth again. To Fighting Pastons succeeded Lawyer Pastons, and then a famous naval captain, one Clement, who captured the French admiral, Baron de St. Blankheare, and kept him prisoner at his castle of Caistor; which reads like a bit out of a comic opera, but seems to be sober fact nevertheless. Equally solid were the seven thousand crowns of ransom that were squeezed out of the baron, and the silver flagon he left behind him.

And thus the Pastons went on and prospered from generation to generation, till in an evil hour one of them was made Earl of Yarmouth by King Charles the Second, and his son then married one of that King's natural daughters. The modest acres of the Paston estates could not sustain all this splendour and dignity, and the second Earl of Yarmouth came to something like want, and had to dispose of all his family papers, among them the hoarded letters of the stirring times before alluded to.

Now, Norfolk has always abounded in painstaking antiquaries—that is, ever since the study of antiquity came into fashion, and one of the most industrious and acquisitive of these antiquarians and collectors was Peter le Neve, Norroy king-at-arms, who was also a landowner in Norfolk, at Witchingham and elsewhere. It was, by the way, the father, or, perhaps, the uncle of this Peter who was herald-at-arms to Charles the First in his civil war, and who was dispatched by that monarch to the rival host at Edgehill to summon the traitors to disband and disperse, with an offer of the King's gracious pardon for instant compliance. All was begun with due form and ceremony, when the Earl of Manchester, the commander of the Parliament forces, rode angrily up, and uncourteously addressing the herald—so unlike those mirrors of courtesy and preux chevaliers of old!—bade him cease that tomfoolery or he would have him knocked on the head. Sad to say, the herald did not rise to the occasion. He ought to have denounced the uncourteous knight and delivered his message spite of all; but the words stuck in his throat, and he could only ride away, pursued by the derisive laughter of his foes. To return from this digression, Peter le Neve, having become the possessor of the Paston letters, kept them till his death; when his collections were sold by greedy heirs-at-law, who cared for none of these things. But another zealous antiquary was lying in wait—honest Tom Martin, of

Palgrave, who bought such of the MSS. as were sold, and, finding that Le Neve's widow had retained some of the most valuable in her own possession, he gallantly married the widow, and acquired the MSS. But Martin's collections also came to the hammer, or would have done, had not a speculative chemist, at Diss, one John Worth, made a bid for the whole. The general bulk of Martin's collections were scattered to the four winds, but Worth retained the Paston letters, and at his death they were purchased by one Fenn, who gave them to the world by printing and publishing them, to the great delight of Horace Walpole and the cognoscenti of that period. Fenn thereupon gave the letters to the King, and received the honour of knighthood in reward. But, strange to say, from that moment the originals disappeared. Now that after all their vicissitudes, it might have been expected that here was full security and honour in the very library of the King, these unique documents were spirited away.

There are still many diligent archæologists in Norfolk whose researches in various directions, were there time and space, might afford a good deal of interest. We might discourse of Yarmouth and its curious relations with the Cinque Ports; and there is much to be said of the herring-fishing, and the Dutch who resorted to Yarmouth long after the Cinque Ports men had deserted it.

There is Norwich, too, with its strange countrified appearance, like some enlarged village.

When shall the muses by fair Norwich dwell? asks Michael Drayton, evidently not expecting such a conjunction; but the historian of the city might have a good deal to say as to those who cultivated the muses, not as at Edinburgh upon a little oatmeal, but upon solid Norfolk beef and dumplings. The literary history of Norwich is a good deal connected with its commercial history; with the Protestant immigration from France, and the manufactures that were founded here and there, always somewhat exotic and forced in their growth, and latterly tending rather to decay than growth. Others again might enlarge upon the Cathedral and recall the memory of the first Bishop of Norwich, Losinga, that stirring builder and worker in all directions whose handiwork is visible in these massive foundations. There are two grand old massive columns entwined grotesquely with spiral

mouldings in the nave of that cathedral which strike one with the sense of a rude, overpowering force, while the grouping of the tower and treble apse, allowing for the degradations of subsequent builders, gives the impression of having realised for once the ordered and insolent strength of the Norman race.

It was just outside Norwich, too, that the great rebellion of Norfolk annals came to its cruel end. It was at Wymondham the rebellion began, some miles to the south of Norwich—a true peasants' war, waged not only against the great nobles, whose claims were more generally acquiesced in, but also against the swarm of newly-enriched commercial as well as agricultural settlers, who were gradually buying up the land and turning their acquisitions to the best advantage. A general sense of grinding wrong and oppression drove the poor fellows to arms, and they made one Kett, a tanner of Wymondham, their leader. Kett seems to have set up his camp on Mousehold Heath, and to have ruled his motley army with a good deal of skill and resolution. But his levies broke before the more disciplined order and infinitely superior weapons of knights and men-at-arms, led by the proud and fated John Dudley.

But Wymondham recalls other more recent and sinister memories than that of the patriotic tanner. It was in this neighbourhood that the pre-eminently great murder of Norfolk, and indeed of the century generally, was committed.

At Hethel-on-Potash Farm lived James Blomefield Rush, farmer, agent, appraiser, auctioneer, a man who had meddled with many things, and in general with fair success; but who had entangled himself with leases, mortgages, and bad speculations; while the constant drain of an irregular establishment—if not more than one—in London had brought him to hopeless ruin. One of the direct agents of this ruin, enacting his bond with ruthless, if justifiable, persistence, was a certain Mr. Isaac Jermy, of Stanfield Hall, Recorder of Norwich, chairman of the quarter sessions, and a man of position and influence. Rush's business relations with Mr. Jermy had been of long standing, and were complicated with lawsuits and bankruptcy proceedings; but the general result was that, in spite of all his wiles and devices, Rush was now driven into a corner, and would soon be compelled to vacate his farm, and begin the world again, without means, and hampered by connections that were without

legal sanction. Thus it was in a spirit of determined revenge, rather than from a hope of saving himself, that Rush issued out, night after night, armed to the teeth, determined on the destruction of the Jermy family, and stalking his foes with savage and terrible persistence.

Stanfield Hall was a handsome, but not extensive, Tudor mansion, with some sinister memories even then clinging to it as the birthplace—so tradition has it—of Amy Robsart, from whence the brilliant Lord Dudley had lured her to become his half-acknowledged bride. It was occupied at this date by Isaac Jermy, who was a widower, his son and his son's wife, and a small establishment of servants. On the fatal night, between seven and eight o'clock, there was heard a knocking at the hall-door, to ascertain the cause of which—if it had not been a preconcerted arrangement made with Rush—Mr. Jermy left his dining-room and went out into the porch. Here Rush shot him down, and stalked into the hall a masked figure, putting the terrified butler to flight by a gesture; and on the way meeting young Jermy, despatched him with a second shot. Then coolly loading his weapon—a double-barrelled blunderbuss—Rush made for the last of the family—young Mrs. Jermy. A maid-servant interfering, received the contents of one barrel, and Mrs. Jermy fell before the second; but these last were not mortal wounds, and eventually the two women recovered, and were able to give evidence.

Still, the evidence of identification was but slender, and Rush might have escaped the gallows but for the evidence of his ill-used paramour, Emily Sandford, who, fired by her own wrongs and her horror of the crime, gave every detail of his movements—of his behaviour—of his words—implying long-cherished plans of vengeance; in fact, fastened the rope firmly about his neck with her weak, childish hands.

A CORAL WORKER.

A STORY.

THE very ground was ruddy with the dust of the coral; yes, all along the highway from Naples out to the arid slopes of Vesuvius and to Pompeii.

How a trade monopolises one's very instincts! To live in Torre del Greco means that as soon as one's fingers have grown sure, as soon as one's mind can grasp the difference between the right and the wrong

way of drilling a hole in the hard coral, one becomes a coral-worker.

All the world gets a living out of coral in some way or other. At least, all the world may do this; but do not the men and the boys know the pleasure of doing nothing? How they lie there on the stones about the old quays! All along the big open ways of Santa Lucia, one may see them. No matter if they be half-clad, they are so warm in the sun and the dear dirt they love! They must love the dirt, or they would not have existed in it for so many generations. The wonder is that fever and her hideous companions do not burst rampant and fully armed from out of the masses and dens of dirt! It lurks there, of course, and it kills some; but, one day—one day soon, perhaps—Naples will be decimated of her populous, noisy hordes, and one day, the sunny, laughing, gay city will mourn and will cry in terror.

You may say that the coral-workers do not live in Naples, that Torre del Greco, where they do live, is not Naples; but that is only making a distinction that is worth nothing.

When did you leave the last street of Naples, and when were you in the first one of Torre del Greco? You are only a stranger, looking at the picturesque scenes of Naples, and you go driving luxuriously along—along—along till you come to Pompeii—you cannot say we are wrong!

The high, white-plastered houses were massed closely together; there was a Magazzino for one thing, and a Magazzino for another, if one were to believe what was painted up on the upper floors; down below on the ground-floor, were always dark, cavernous openings—rooms. A door might stand open, and one might see within a bedstead or a rolled-up mattress making a lighter form of something in the dim darkness, a wooden chair might be set within the doorway, but certainly wooden chairs would be set outside it.

Such hundreds of dwellings there are alike, we must pick out one from the many.

Every doorway has its pink cloud, colouring the white dust of the ground about it. Do not venture to ask how many call such a dim room home!

It was early morning, an early spring morning, to be exact, with a clear, cool breeze from off the sunny bay.

By a doorway in Torre del Greco there was a wooden table set, and two girls sat by it at work with bits of coral about

them. Beyond them were more chairs—in fact, a whole household seemed to be established under the shadow of the big white house. Indoor domestic work evidently did not exist, or, we will say was done; a hideous old crone was squatting on a three-legged stool. Down at her feet was a child nearly naked. At one moment he rolled in the dust, and the next he was clambering up to his mother's knee; she—the mother—sat composedly knitting. A girl stood, leaning her shoulder against the wall, beside the old crone, spinning flax. Another girl was sitting on a chair rather forward, in luxurious enjoyment, for was not her young aunt dressing her hair for the day? One does a deal of decoration out in the streets of Torre del Greco, and it was 'Cinta's day to be made beautiful. So the long black tresses were plaited and coiled round and round the dainty head. Stop! a touch here, and a touch there, and the soft toss of fringe above the low, dark forehead was lovely.

"Now you'll do!"

Of course this was said in Italian; but what the gay aunt said meant something like these words. She gave 'Cinta a little push, and she threw out her arms, as much as to say she had done a good day's work.

"Are we to do your share as well as our own?" called one of the coral-workers.

"Ah, but I should like that!" 'Cinta replied, rising, and shaking her skirt.

The said skirt was of some green stuff, and bore three bands of yellow upon its hem. Above was a white garment, loose and full, that rose nearly to her throat, and had loose sleeves to the elbow.

"Come—e subito, subito!" (quickly, quickly!) cried one of the busy girls.

She wore a pink cotton skirt, with a dingy brown bodice, but the brown was relieved by a bright orange kerchief. She shook out a string of threaded coral.

The girl facing her was drilling holes. 'Cinta, too, should have been drilling holes, for 'Mena—or Filomena—had threaded almost all the bits there were to thread. If you have been to Naples, you will know of the cheap strings of coral the men and boys hawk about the Chiaja for so little. So little! They ask you plenty, but they will take just anything. Only, do not show you are ignorant; tell them you know they are only the broken pieces left from finer work, then a few soldi will buy a string.

"Yes, it is easy for you to work!"

'Cinta cried, still holding aloof. "Your work is no work! Just change with me, or with Mariana there. Will you do that?"

"One day—not to-day. Ah, look! there are some more strangers driving along. How good to be a rich Inglese, and only to take one's pleasure!"

"What do you know?" Mariana looked up from her drilling of holes. "Would I be an Inglese? No! They say, where they live there is no sun, and there is snow all day—all day and all night, too, in the winter."

"I don't believe it."

'Cinta was still gazing outwards. Many little carriages, and some big ones, were rolling along the road. Of course, all their occupants were going out to Pompeii. The drivers cracked their long whips, and screamed "Yah! yah!" and they lauded or abused their horses, and they flung their jokes at other drivers, all at the highest pitch of their voices, and always with gesticulations violent enough to exhaust the energy of any but a Samson or a Neapolitan.

"Well, I'll work now; but—I am going to Pompeii."

She nodded her pretty dark head as she pushed 'Mena a bit aside, stealing a corner of her chair for her own behoof.

"You! And how will you go?" Mariana asked incredulously. "When, too?"

"Domenica" (Sunday) was the one word.

"Ah!" and 'Mena clapped her brown hands, "then I know. What I said was truth. Listen, you Mariana!"

She ceased threading her bits of coral.

"Have I not heard you once?" the other girl answered. "Once is enough. Pasquale Stingo is not my brother; what is he to me?" She waved her hand with a haughty gesture. "He is a gran' signor, far too great for me to know anything about."

"Chè, chè, chè!" the gay aunt broke in. "What do I hear, and what do I see? Mariana pretends to be scornful, and her face— Beware, my little one, or it will be said that when a girl shows anger it shows that she has a wound."

"You are wise, tanta mia," the girl retorted, "but you may make a mistake."

"Tchah, tchah! Pasquale will not need long ears to hear what you say." And the woman laughingly turned from the girls, and bowed low, waving her hands at the same time.

A carriage was passing, and a man on the box bowed likewise, taking off his hat and waving it below his feet, almost. He

was a handsome Neapolitan; his head was closely cropped, and he wore the trimmest of trim moustaches. A crimson necktie was tied loosely at his throat. For all else his dress was simply that which any young man might wear in any European capital in summer-time. It was simply a light suit. Also, he wore faultless gloves of the proper tan-colour. Certainly he looked a gentleman, and no first gentleman of any land could have bowed with more finished grace than he had done.

He was just a Neapolitan—Pasquale Stingo, the first cicerone of the city. He was out day after day with strangers; day after day, day after day, was he easily taking his ten or twenty lire. Surely he was rich—a "gran' signor," as Mariana had said.

'Cinta was rosy, and she alone of the three girls had not bowed. She was shy.

After that she worked away harder than either of her companions. They chattered, and more than once they nodded gaily to some of their friends passing by. 'Cinta, generally the most talkative, said scarcely a word.

All that morning she had been feeling a very grand personage—what girl of her sort would not be justly elated to have such a man as Pasquale select her for his betrothed? Yes, she was that, and the notice of the betrothal would be posted up at the proper office in a few days. Then Sunday would come, and he would take her out to Pompeii; she would see the wonderful place. Yes, though one would scarcely believe it, 'Cinta had never gone farther from home than Torre Annunziata on the one hand and Naples on the other.

And then, with all her greatness upon her, she had been a little fool, and had been ashamed to nod and smile at Pasquale. Whatever had possessed her? So she worked and worked, and was in a fiery little passion of anger with herself all the time.

Of course, her companions did not leave her alone, but said sharp things to her, and teased her. Each girl had her own way. 'Mena was good-natured, but we cannot say as much for Mariana; this was, perhaps, because 'Mena was rich in a lover of her own, young Donato Fusco, who worked at the great macaroni factory, while Mariana had no one who admired her in that way.

"You were cruel," 'Mena was saying—

"Cruel!" Mariana was scornful and satirical in her little way. "Cruel! You

do not know what the word means. Is she not rather a wise woman? Ah, 'Cinta sees far, she knows the vanity and the conceit of the men; she will drag Pasquale to her feet, if only she can be haughty long enough! Keep it up, 'Cinta—keep it up!"

"And you say—you, Mariana, say that Pasquale has vanity and has conceit?" 'Cinta cried hotly, with eyes aflame, and her brown hand working angrily. "What do you know? You do not dare to say that twice! I will—I will——"

What a little tigress she was!

"Basta, basta!" Mariana answered with scornful quietness. "Pasquale is a man—is he not?"

"He is not what you say!" was the retort. "You are jealous, but—would he ever think of you? You that are——"

"Come, 'Cinta," Mena began.

For the moment the girl was quieted; as to Mariana she had been quiet, too quiet, all along. Now, at this point, her eyes flashed, though she spoke even more unconcernedly:

"You take too much trouble, 'Mena mia! Is it not all a play? It is amusing to see the anger of the little one. Ha, ha! But, 'Cinta, I speak sense for all that. Snub Pasquale and he will worship you. Now you worship him—yes," she nodded, "I know. Does he not hold you in his fingers to do as he likes?"

Here she held up her hand, squeezing thumb and finger tips all together with the Neapolitan gesture that can be made to point every sharp meaning under the sun. Then all at once she fell to work again.

"It is false, you—you—you——"

"She only teases——" Mena began consolingly.

"Then let her tease you. Would you bear it?" 'Cinta was very angry.

'Mena only shrugged her shoulders and laughed. Mariana could not help one more word.

"But how can I tease 'Mena? Is not her Donato just one of us? He works; he is no gran' signor like your Pasquale. No."

"He is as good, you tongue of a serpent!" and 'Mena was suddenly standing upright, and her good-temper had turned to a flash of fire. "Would such a man as either Pasquale or Donato look at the face of Mariana? Ah, but I am your enemy if you say that word again."

"Dear, dear, and you laughed just now at the thought of my teasing! Shall I dare to speak? No." She fell silent a moment.

"No, no, I wonder what would happen if I told you I had found a gran' signor for myself. Ha, ha! Do you think I would take either Pasquale or Donato?"

"I do not believe——" Mena said.

Pasquale had gone driving along with his strangers. Ah, he was a proud man, he knew he was the best guide in Naples; if he had not been that, would the manager of the new hotel have taken him up and have ensured to him such a good season? No, certainly he would not. He would have been standing about at street-corners, or he would have been living on his wits at Pompeii, or at San Martino, or at Camaldoli, just trying to get what custom might be thrown in his way by strangers happening to come out without a guide.

Now he was settled—yes, well settled, and with so good a wife as 'Cinta Cavelli would be, he would soon be as prosperous as any man in Naples. These had been his sentiments as, in the early fresh morning, he had rolled luxuriously through Torre del Greco, and had looked out for 'Cinta.

Such a number of bows he got, he heard some quick laughter and some merry English words from the ladies and gentlemen in the carriage. Pasquale did not quite understand English, but he knew he was, or rather his friends were, amusing these people.

Then someone said a gay word to him, and he proudly answered that his "promessa sposa" was amongst the girls.

And as he spoke he suddenly remembered that 'Cinta had made him no sign. It was nothing—nothing; he would scold her when he saw her in the evening.

But all day his foreigners would stay at Pompeii; they were too devoted. They would not fear the heavy, fiery air; they would explore and would read their red books, and would measure, and would see places a second time. What folly! he groaned to himself; what would they learn which had not been learnt hundreds of years ago?

The truth was that he kept continually thinking of the strangeness of 'Cinta. Why had she not looked up and nodded to him?

But at last the strangers were ready. They were tired, and they asked him no more questions; almost silently they drove along from the burning, dry, grey, dusty country into the old streets. The tall houses were in shadow; the air was almost

chilly from off the sea; the people were no longer busy hanging out the macaroni to dry; work was over—even the women and girls had done coral work for the day.

But the children were rolling about and playing, and the girls could stand and talk.

There were all the Cavelli girls out, and the grandmother, and the mother, and the aunt. Men, too, mostly young men. Pasquale, looking from a little distance, stroked his trim moustache, and set his new hat more firmly on his brow; should he not, in the shortest of time, burst upon them like a prince among peasants?

The carriage rolled past. 'Mena was standing on one side with Donato—a good fellow that!—but why should 'Cinta laugh with Donato's brother? Diavolo! why should she laugh with any man? and Pasquale ground his white teeth. He would pay her out.

There was Mariana, with her hands on her hips, standing forward, nearly under the horses' feet. One does many things that are foolish under an angry impulse. Pasquale made a great fuss of taking off his hat to Mariana. The others were too busy to see him.

By-and-by, Pasquale did swoop down upon the party. He forgot that he was to be as a prince amongst them, all by reason of his good luck and his good clothes; he showed them that he was most unprincipally in temper. He was angry, he was jealous, and he was rude to 'Cinta, and he started a wild flirtation with Mariana.

She was not a nice girl; she took him in his wild humour, and she, being strong of will, fanned the evil that was in him.

He was not bad at heart—nay, he had been very good at heart, but, for the time, he had lost the rule over himself, and his fiery Neapolitan blood was ready for anything.

The end was that Pasquale never went to the grave official about his betrothal to 'Cinta, but let Mariana think that it would be her name, and not her sister's, which would very soon be posted up with that of Pasquale Stingo.

There was nothing for 'Cinta to do but just to work on at her coral-work—one must have bread, however little else one may exist on.

Time went on, and things were as they always were, when the hot weather came the strangers who bought the coral and who needed the guides all went away, and Naples had just its own people and their squalor and dirt. And the sun scorched

and the fever took away some—one never knew who was likely to go; young or old, one never knew.

But it was always so—one could not change one's life because there was the fever. When it came, one would naturally go to church a little more often, and one would try to give more candles to Madonna; and where they had left the shrines and pictures of the saints on the walls of the streets, one would be sure to kneel for a moment, as the padre said they should do.

Mariana was tiresome; she had no faith, she had no respect for anything.

"Yes!" she one day cried; "we are to do that. What is the use?"

"Silence!" And the grandmother's old voice was like a pipe out of tune.

Mariana only shrugged her shoulders, and set her fingers to knot anew her crimson kerchief.

"Will you?" the old hag cried, and stopped. "Yes, it is you and the like of you who will bring the evil sickness upon us. Ah, it came once before, and do I not know? Hundreds, thousands will die in the streets! You have no faith; you think no more of the holy saints than you do of—of me!"

"Nonna mia!" (my grandmother) "you are unkind to say it so! Do I not think much—all the world of you?" And Mariana made a show of being hurt. "But can I make so much faith? I do more than many; every week I carry a new white candle to Madonna."

"Yes, and you jeer at the blessed saints as you pass them!" The old woman shook her withered finger at the girl.

"Well, can they mind much?" And Mariana was very lofty. "Can they mind much," she repeated, "when they let themselves be painted out with one splash of the brush?"—and a gesture showed the action she meant. "If a saint has a great power, why does he let an infidel like Tomaso down there dash a lot of nasty whitewash over him and hide him for ever and ever?"

"The blessed angels save us!" the grandmother cried in undisguised horror. "What must be coming when these things are done, and the very children look on and are allowed to say, like her, 'It is right! it is right!'"

"You groan too much," her daughter put in—the girl's mother. "The fever has not been nearly so bad this year."

"The fever! There is a worse thing than the fever!" and the old woman shook

out her hands in impotent fear and terror.

"Bah! the ships bring that sickness! Let the ships and the sailors keep away!"

The woman moved away with her knitting.

"They will not see—no one sees. But I have known it, and it will come," the grandmother went on to herself. "When they are all dead, and only one looks on, what then?"

Again time ran on.

If there had been much illness in Naples, the people forgot it; they are so volatile, so light-hearted. The winter came, and it was a flourishing time. Strangers came and brought their wealth, and there was no more talk amongst the people about the dreadful sickness—it had shown itself and had gone.

The girls plied their trade as coral workers; then, when winter was over, 'Mena went away to be Donato Fusco's wife. He took her to live out at the far distant opposite end of Naples, and one rarely saw her.

'Cinta worked on, but she was not gay. Mariana grew less and less fond of work; she was wild with gaiety, and flirted with Pasquale whenever he gave her a chance, and if not with him, then with any other who came in her way.

Then came a day when Pasquale came purposely amongst them all.

He had to tell them of a good offer he had had to become courier to an English family. Naples was emptying, visitors were going, though it was only spring.

"Yes!" Mariana screamed. "They are all cowards, those foreigners—do I not know? They hear of the sickness—miles and miles away—that la nonna trembles at, and they will fly. You would fly with them!" and she pointed her finger at him and laughed.

Naturally he flushed with anger.

"I am a coward, am I?"

"Chè, chè, chè! you are easily offended! And did I ever say so rude a word to you, my gran' signor?"

She danced round before him.

"You meant it!" 'Cinta put in with a warm decision.

How glad she would be if Pasquale would go; it would carry him to safety, to a cool, fresh land, and—the weariness of life would be over for her. Surely it would be better to have Pasquale always out of her

reach than to see him as she did now. Seeing him and hearing him as she did now, listening so often to Mariana's stinging words, were simply too much torture for her. Life was a weariness. 'Cinta was every day envying her old grandmother, who must die one day soon. So she spoke warmly, and for the moment threw off the control she had learnt to put upon herself.

"Take it, Pasquale," she cried in her impulsive way; "take the offer. It will be good for you!"

"You think as Mariana thinks?" he cried. "You—'Cinta?"

"No, no, no!" and pressing her hands together she extended them imploringly. Her eyes were aflame, and for a moment her brown face was crimson. Then, as her hot words poured from her, a grey paleness came in place of the fiery colour. "No, no; what I think is the very opposite. Do I not know you, Pasquale Stingo? If she says you are a coward, I say you are brave; if she says you fly, I say—I say that—"

"'Cinta, you are absurd!" The other girl spoke scornfully.

"But she is true—I would fly." The young man was very quiet.

Mariana laughed again.

"It is not true!" 'Cinta said these words under her breath.

"But it is true—quite true," Pasquale repeated. "Listen. I go as courier to England, and I tell my signor that if I go with him my wife will also need to go with me."

"Ah, your wife? Do we know her, Signor Pasquale?" Mariana asked freezingly.

He waved her off.

"When I reach England I make myself independent. I have a shop, a business; my wife cooks the dinner—we live well. Ah, if my wife will fly with me, then I fly. 'Cinta, anima mia, you know you will be my wife?"

Yes, 'Cinta did know; how could she help but know, when Pasquale, before she had time to think a moment, had her tightly in his arms?

As she did not try to free herself, he must have taken her silence for consent. Mariana heard no more, but fled away; her temper never was one of the best.

Before the summer was there, Pasquale and his wife were away from Naples. It was well; the old grandmother's fears were verified—more than verified.

The gay, laughing city mourned in consternation. The direful sickness had come.

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